

## **Chanukah -A Time to Reflect and Rededicate, A Time to Recall the Yamim Noraim**

Chanukah, a time of rededication, is upon us. One thing that means is that close to three months have passed since we ushered in Rosh Hashanah and calendar year 5777. Although a fourth of the year has elapsed, it still feels like just yesterday that we were all standing together in Shul over the Yamim Noraim. Because the freshness of the Yamim Noraim is still palpable at this time of rededication, this is just the right time to reconvene, take stock, and assess if we are reaching the goals and benchmarks we set out for ourselves. Here are some questions we should be asking at this juncture in the year: Did my resolution or resolutions stick? Did I even make a resolution? Have I lost the momentum I had? Did I fall and not get back up? Can I start again now? Where do I go from here?

In light of these questions, I thought it might perhaps be helpful to review the main points, take-away messages, and action items of the six Drashos delivered over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The goal of this brief summary is to review what we discussed in order to help concretize the goals we set out then or wish to embark upon now.

At the end of each Drashah summary below, I have added a link to a video which relates to one point within it. I think you will find the links inspirational and meaningful.

### **Rosh Hashanah Day 1- Making your mark on the world**

George Eliot said "it is never too late to be what you might have been." C.S. Lewis said "You are never too old to set another goal, or to dream another dream." Each of us was placed in this world to accomplish a goal, to make this world a better place than we found it at the time of our arrival. "Ordinary people" have made incredible differences by opening their eyes to the needs that surround them. We are not charged to change the world, but if we look within our own little worlds we can notice a small hole, a particular vacuum, an apparent void that is ours to fill. Don't forget about the lives of Dr. Victor Frankel and Mrs. Clara Hammer, ("the chicken lady of Jerusalem"), who were never asked to provide the answers they did but nonetheless made monumental differences in the lives of many. They perceived a void in their world and followed through to fill it. We are not asked to turn the world around, but God has given us each a job, a mission to accomplish.

It is up to each of us to find that mission, pursue it, and conquer the problem our mission is meant to confront it with the greatest strength we can.

Video about the story of Mrs. Clara Hammer, the chicken lady of Jerusalem--  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZYWIYT6ONY>

### **Rosh Hashanah Day 2- You have to make a plan**

We all want to eat healthier, exercise regularly, spend more time with our families, be a better friend, and be a better spouse. These remain merely desires if we do not make and actualize a plan to see to their fruition. We all want to learn more, daven regularly, make it to Minyan on time, and understand the words of the Siddur better. Again, these all remain dreams and desires if we don't make and follow through on a plan. We can accomplish a lot more than we think- the difference between those who do accomplish and those who don't is often a plan. What is beyond our grasp is within our reach if we consider and define the steps we need to take to get there. What is your plan? How will you bring those desires to fruition? If you don't yet have a plan, challenge yourself and develop one. If you do have a plan, make sure you are following through with it and advancing it daily. Don't forget the story of Mr. Nachum Stillerman who at age seventy, half-jokingly, presented Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel tz"l, the late Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva with a plan to finish Shas. The plan consisted of learning ten hours a day for the next twenty one years. The Rosh Yeshiva responded- now that's a plan!

Rabbi Frand lecture at the Siyum Hashas about making a plan  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfyny79--\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfyny79--_4)

### **Shabbos Shuva and Kol Nidrei Drashos- Anger Management and Forgiveness the Torah Way**

How many times have we been hurt, insulted, wronged, taken advantage of, or not appreciated? How do we react after such an event?

There are two reactions one can potentially have to such situations- You can get angry and upset, or you can continue reading for four suggestions as to how to handle it.

1. Consider the reason why the individual who wronged you behaved the way he did. If you put yourself in his shoes, you will have an easier time reconciling what was done to you, not getting angry, and ultimately be forgiving of the action.
2. Move on- don't get stuck on petty things, don't harp on what was. It's not physically or emotionally healthy to hold a grudge. It may not be easy to do, but the decision to move on will reap long lasting dividends.
3. Recognize that everything that happens to you is for a reason. If you were wronged or insulted, somewhere within that situation in which you were wronged is a message from On High. Hashem runs the world, and there may be a lesson to be learned from what you are experiencing.
4. Think: Is the source of your anger something that would still make you angry one year from today? If the answer to that question is yes, then you are not yet ready to move on. If the answer to the question is no- then it's already not something to be angry about now. You can move on.

Video about Mr. Bruckstein whose entire family was killed as a result of his "best friend" stealing his family's visas

<http://www.frumtube.com/video/4048/Letting-Go#.WDhR4cD2a1s>

### **Yom Kippur Yizkor Drashah- The Sound of Silence**

What is the meaning of the words "a still and thin sound" in the Tefillah of "U'nesaneh Tokef" teaching us? How do we reconcile this calming statement with the rest of the frightening passage which stresses how life and death are standing in the balance at that very moment? One way is to understand the Tefillah's message as calling us to strip away what doesn't matter and pay attention to what does.

The most powerful talk, frightening facts, or inspirational words can only take one so far. Ultimately, real and true growth can only come from introspection and self-assessment coupled with wise counsel. When the tefillah speaks of life and death, yes, that is something that awakens us to repent and "promise" to be better, but ultimately it's in the quiet moments of "a still and thin sound" when we begin to make real life changes. Take time to yourself, with yourself, with a notebook, with a trusted friend, family member, spouse, or Rabbi, and really consider how you can take the steps that need to be taken to bring out the real you.

Simon and Garfunkel- The sound of silence

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=lyrics+to+simon+and+garfunkel+song+the+sound+of+silence&view=detail&mid=E0C64D42F3FAEFDB2A8AE0C64D42F3FAEFDB2A8A&FORM=VIRE>

### **Neilah Drashah- Chinese Bamboo**

Each and every year as we stand at Neilah, we guarantee ourselves that this year will be different. We will really change, accomplish the goals that we charted out, and do things differently than we did last year. Here we are again- another year, and we still look the same way we did last year. What do we do now? The answer can be found by watching the development of the Chinese bamboo. The bamboo is planted, and does not begin to sprout until its fifth year. Then, seemingly all of a sudden, in six weeks it shoots upwards of 90 feet. So how long does it take the Chinese bamboo to grow? The answer- not six weeks, but five years!

The bamboo is watered, the soil is fertilized, and the area is guarded as the bamboo slowly grows an intricate system of deep and powerful roots over these years. These small actions which occur day after day and year after year are what allow for the dramatic growth spurt which is only seen years later. We grow in a similar fashion; if we just add one thing to our regimen, once a day, every day- a Mitzvah, a Chesed, a Berachah, a Mishnah—*something*, the growth will come. Maybe not tomorrow, or the day after, but the growth will come.

The growth of the Chinese bamboo

<http://www.aish.com/h/hh/video/57973927.html>

### **Moving Forward**

As we reflect and rededicate in this season, we must first and most of all realize Hashem has granted us the gift of life, the greatest gift-wrapped present of all, and that our individual lives fit into a larger picture. Hashem deeply desires that the present be used wisely, taken advantage of, and used to its fullest. Hashem believes in each of us, and the world at large; we need to believe in ourselves. Let us all unwrap the gift of life by bringing out our piece of the puzzle that is the larger picture. If each and every individual fills in his or her piece, then the

intricate puzzle of the world can be completed and then may we merit the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.